Comparing conventional vs. organic: Don’t judge sustainability by yield alone

[T]wo colleagues and I published a paper in PLOS ONE titled “*Commercial crop yields reveal strengths and weaknesses for organic agriculture in the United States*.” The article presents an analysis of USDA crop yield data to compare organic and conventional farms in the US. . . .

. . . .Our paper [was used by Alex Berezow at the American Council on Science and Health] to support a questionable conclusion regarding sustainability:

> [The lower yield in organic agriculture] violates the very notion of sustainability. An inefficient food production system that cannot feed everybody is, by definition, not sustainable.

. . . .

Evaluating “sustainability” is difficult. . . yield is important, but so is biodiversity, economics. . . environmental impacts. . . Producing . . . food in a way that destroys the environment is obviously unsustainable. Protecting the environment to the extent that . . . people go hungry is also . . . the answer lies . . . between these two extremes. . . . [W]e need to continue increasing realized crop yields to feed the world population, especially in developing regions where the conventional yield gap is greatest. But dismissing the benefits of organic agriculture simply because it yields less than conventional farming (which also don’t come even close to maximizing yield) seems . . . unscientific . . .

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: How much yield is enough?